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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Rep. Debra Kolste, (608) 266-7503

KOLSTE BILL REPEALS ONE-WEEK WAITING PERIOD FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

One-week Waiting Period Has a Devastating Effect on Wisconsin's Working Families

(MADISON) – Rep. Debra Kolste (D-Janesville) and Rep. Cory Mason (D-Racine) today began circulating legislation to repeal Wisconsin's one-week waiting period for laid-off workers seeking unemployment benefits.

Wisconsin continues to lag other Midwestern states in job growth, and the Wisconsin Legislature must protect workers struggling to make ends meet after devastating job losses, Kolste said.

Kolste pointed to a recent layoff at Data Dimensions in Janesville. The company laid off 120 workers after they finished their overnight shift. Articles detailed the workers' feelings of confusion, helplessness, and panic after losing their incomes.

Imposing a one-week waiting period only compounds the very real financial concerns of Wisconsin workers who find themselves out of a job, Kolste said.

Other recent mass layoffs across Wisconsin include:

- 165 workers laid off from Sealed Air Corp. in Sturtevant
- 53 workers laid off from a Staples facility in Oak Creek
- 89 workers laid off from Georgia Pacific in Green Bay
- 29 workers laid off from Hampton Products in Shell Lake

"In 2011, the legislature took a drastic step that has hurt Wisconsin families significantly: creating a one-week waiting period before a newly-unemployed worker could claim unemployment benefits," Kolste said. "No justification exists for making unemployed workers wait a week for their benefits to start. The bills for rent, food, and other necessities don't wait a week. Newly unemployed workers use their benefits for essential goods as they begin their mandatory job search. The money from unemployment insurance is spent immediately by people in need."

In a co-sponsorship memorandum to other legislators, Kolste urged lawmakers to consider the issue in terms of real dollars. According to the Department of Workforce Development, laid-off workers who had been making \$15/hour would lose out on up to \$370 by being required to wait an additional week before receiving unemployment benefits.

"That's \$370 that families could use to buy groceries, pay utility bills, or pay health care premiums," Kolste said. "It's \$370 that a laid-off worker could put toward finding a new job to once again contribute to our state economy."

Kolste noted that Governor Walker is currently touting a \$5 decrease in property taxes, which is considered to be only a nominal decrease that won't make a real impact on the day-to-day lives of average Wisconsinites.

"Five dollars won't make a real impact on the day-to-day lives of average Wisconsinites," Kolste said. "But getting rid of the waiting period for unemployment benefits will make a big difference for so many who are already devastated by having lost their jobs."

"It's time we stand up for Wisconsin's working families," Kolste said.

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